

# Palestine Perspectives

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## REPUBLIC UNDER OCCUPATION

An independent Palestinian state has been proclaimed by the highest representative body of the Palestinian people, the Palestine National Council. The Palestinian Declaration of Independence, proclaimed on 15 November 1988, "a day unlike all days," makes the West Bank and Gaza a republic under occupation.

Within less than 24 hours, the Reagan administration made it clear which side it was on, and it was not the side of self-government. One still hopes that it was more an instinctive reaction caused by years of conditioning, rather than a policy.

America was the first country to base its birthright as an independent state on the basis of an inalienable right of peoples to govern themselves. It was also America which gave "self-determination" to the vocabulary of the world. More than any other country on earth, America should be able to understand and support the Palestinian struggle for self-government.

For a year now, the people of occupied Palestine have been victims of an ordeal without parallel. In 1988, it has been a daily Palestinian experience to bleed, and to languish in prison without trial. Their children have been denied schooling, their homes have been blown up, their orchards have been uprooted, their sons have been deported, and their places of worship have been violated. The camps of their refugees abroad have been frequently bombed, and their leaders have been assassinated.

One can debate the politics of the situation: Are the Palestinians entitled to be free? Do Israel's needs—real and imagined—justify the denial of Palestinian freedom? What shape is Palestinian freedom to take, and how to work out the intricacies of Arab-Israeli peace? All these issues, and others, can be debated. But what is beyond

debate is that the Palestinians have become one of the most threatened peoples on earth, and the Israeli occupation is the source of that threat. Independence for them has become a matter of survival.

One can debate Palestinian and Israeli rights and obligations to facilitate a peaceful resolution to a conflict that has always been dangerous and, with the increasing availability of weapons of mass destruction, has become potentially catastrophic. But what is beyond debate is that the occupation is no way to promote anyone's security and well-being.

The Palestinian Israeli conflict is often portrayed as "complex" and "intractable." It is frequently pictured as if it were beyond man's ingenuity to resolve it. This absurdity is meant to evade the responsibility to act and to justify tolerance of the status quo. Nowhere else has foreign military occupation been tolerated as an "intractable" issue which is best left alone.

This is not to minimize or belittle the difficulties involved in working out a process of Arab-Israeli accommodation. It is, however, an argument against the partisan notion that the status quo has become legitimate, and the sooner the Arabs understand and accept that fact the better everyone will be. Like murder, the denial of freedom cannot have a statute of limitations.

The Palestinian uprising has exposed the folly of the concept of perpetual occupation. Israel's repeated and futile efforts to subdue the Palestinian people have only denied peaceful existence to Israel and free existence to the Palestinians. It is time to look beyond the nozzle of the gun for the horizon.

In Algiers, the Palestinians have done just that. It is Israel's turn to show that it is not doomed by unreasoning ambition, and the turn of the United States government to show that America is bigger than its petty and self-seeking politicians. There is something wrong with a people who feel threatened by freedom anywhere. □



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Editor : Dr. Muhammad Hallaj

Assistant Editor : Khalil Jahshan

Production Manager : Foster K. Tucker

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## ISRAEL'S DEATH SQUADS

By Yizhar Be'er

*In October, it was revealed that Israel is using death squads to assassinate suspected leaders of the Palestinian uprising [see this issue, page 16]. The press credentials of three British reporters were suspended by Israel when they broke the story. The following is a report about the murder to two Palestinian youths by an Israeli death squad. It was published in the Israeli Hebrew-language *Kol Ha'ir* on 21 October 1988. English translation by Dr. Israel Shahak:*

**I**s there an Israeli death squad operating in the [occupied] territories? Eyewitness accounts of the slaying of two youths from the village of Yatta suggest that there is. They claim that the killers arrived in a local van, identified the two youths as leaders of the local *Shabiba* [youth movement] and then shot them at close range. The witnesses know of similar incidents which recently took place. The IDF [Israeli Army] denies the allegations.

Yatta residents claim that the two youths who were killed two weeks ago were shot by the passengers of a civilian vehicle with West Bank license plates. Similar allegations have been made in the past. The Israeli defense minister confirmed in a letter to Knesset Member Dedi Zucker that the army regularly confiscates local vehicles.

Two weeks ago, on Sunday 9 October 1988, Kamal Mohammad Hassan Al-Sari'a, age 23, and Fadel Ibrahim Shehadeh Najjar, age 25, were killed in Yatta, a village in the Hebron hills. The IDF version of the circumstances surrounding their deaths was laconic and routine: an IDF unit entered the village and found itself in mortal danger. The soldiers were forced to open fire in order to protect themselves. The villagers, however, have an entirely different version. According to their account, it was a premeditated execution. The two youths, who had been wanted for a long time by the security authorities, were executed by a unit that arrived in Yatta in a local van.

This Monday, we found about 20 people at the home of Mohammad Hassan Al-Sari'a, the 60-year-old father of Kamal, one of the two slain persons. Apart from the father, no one was ready to identify himself by name. In order to be sure that there had been no deliberate attempt to coordinate eyewitness accounts of the killings, we spoke to each witness separately. Then we compared their versions with other testimonies collected by the Association for Civil Rights and the Tolerance Office, run by Yossi Shwartz. All the accounts corroborate the version presented below in its entirety.

On Sunday, 9 October, there was a total commercial and transportation strike in the West Bank to mark the tenth month of the intifada. IDF units were operating in a few villages, but until the end of the incident described below, they did not enter Yatta. In Yatta—a large village with more than 25 clans and a population of more than 40,000 people—the strike was complete. A group of local youths gathered together in the center of the village and groups of children were roaming the hilltops. The village itself, however, was quiet. The quiet was broken by the sudden approach of a Ford van with local license plates which drove up the main road. The entry of the van at the height

of the strike surprised those responsible for implementing the instructions of the united leadership of the uprising.

Kamal Al-Sari'a and Fadel Najjar were two of the leaders of the *Shabiba* [youth] movement in the village. Both of them had been wanted by the security authorities for the past six months. Both of them had recently completed their studies in history at the University of Hebron. The security authorities began to watch the two young nationalists during the last year of their studies, when they began to be politically active. When the intifada began, they were interrogated many times, but following each interrogation they were released. Six months ago, on Land Day [30 March], an IDF unit arrived in Yatta to arrest them. At that point they went into hiding and stopped sleeping at home. In the course of a month, Fadel's father told us, the army would arrive every night—sometimes after midnight, sometimes before dawn—looking for his son, but he was not to be found at home. Then the army stopped coming. Fadel's relatives claim that one night, a week before the fatal incident, the *mukhtar* [village head] of Yatta, who is Fadel's uncle, received an anonymous telephone call: "Fadel is a marked man. You can start preparing his funeral shroud," the caller said.

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*Suddenly, two submachine gun barrels appeared out of the windows and shots were fired at the two men... The two young men were dragged into the car, which sped away from the scene... Another shot or round of shots was heard from inside the van. After driving some 300 meters, the van stopped and the bodies of the two young men were thrown out onto the road.*

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When the vehicle appeared in Yatta, the children on the hills began to throw stones at the strike-breaking van, but the stones did not hit it and, it would seem, its passengers did not pay much attention to them. The van stopped near the local post office, across the road from where the group of about 60 youth had gathered. Najjar and Sari'a, who were at the head of the group, went over to the vehicle in order to find out why it was being driven on a strike day. Before they could understand what was happening, a voice was heard from inside of the car. Someone identified them: "There they are, the f—ers." And suddenly, two submachine gun barrels appeared out of the windows and shots were fired at the two men. Somebody jumped out of the back door of the van and continued to spray them with bullets. Najjar was immediately hit and collapsed. Sari'a managed to run a few meters and then he collapsed as well. One of the local youths who was standing nearby was hit in the leg, apparently by a stray bullet, and he was later hospitalized at the Makassed Hospital in Jerusalem. Another wounded person is still being sought by the security authorities.

The two young men were dragged into the car, which sped away from the scene. The residents allege that at this stage at least one of them was still alive. Another shot or round of shots was heard from inside the van. After

*(continued on page 5)*

## WORKERS BY DAY...SLAVES AT NIGHT

**O**n 15 August 1988, three Palestinian workers from the Gaza Strip were burned to death by Jewish arsonists in the Tel Aviv suburb of Or Yehuda [see *Palestine Perspectives*, no. 37, September/October 1988]. The victims could not save themselves because the shack in which they slept had been locked from the outside.

Locking up Palestinian workers in their places of work during the night is a common practice in Israel, since Israeli law prohibits them from spending the night in Israel. Israeli employers evade the law, and save themselves trouble and expense, by locking up their Arab workers.

This inhumane practice has been going on for many years. Although it has been exposed repeatedly, and although Palestinian workers frequently lost their lives when fires broke out in places where they had been locked up, the practice continues.

### Slave Workers

By Arie Egozi

**T**he tragedy that occurred the day before yesterday, in which three laborers in a mattress factory in Tel Aviv were burned alive, exposed the phenomenon of "hotels" under prison conditions in the work place.

Every evening, the doors of warehouses—turned into makeshift living quarters—are locked. Thousands of workers from the occupied territories employed in Israel are confined within. The doors remain locked until the early morning hours, or shortly before the start of the work day.

This phenomenon—well-known to the police and the civilian guards who conduct nightly patrols of areas where Arab laborers are concentrated—was brought to the attention of the general public as a result of the blaze that broke out the night before last in a small mattress factory in Tel Aviv. After the fire was extinguished, firemen rushed into the structure, which was totally destroyed, and discovered three badly burned bodies.

A brief investigation brought to light the fact that the victims were young laborers from the Gaza Strip who were employed at the factory and spent the night there. Superintendent Avinoam Kahane, spokesman for the Tel Aviv police district, reported yesterday that the police investigation revealed that the three men were unable to escape from the room in which they slept because the door had been locked from the outside.... □

[First published in *Yediot Achronot* of 16 March 1976]



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The following two stories, written twelve years ago, are about Palestinian victims of such practices. *Palestine Perspectives* reprints them for the benefit of a long-delayed debate in this country about Israel's inhumane treatment of Arab workers, as part of its stand on human rights in the world.

The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) has sparked this debate with a petition to U.S. Trade Representative Clayton Yeutter to investigate Israel's duty-free privileges in light of its labor policy. The issue quickly became a campaign issue, and the presidential candidates of the two major parties quickly came to Israel's defense, causing the postponement of the hearings till after the elections. Mr. Dukakis, who described the decision to investigate Israel's labor practices as "absurd," obviously needs to familiarize himself with the facts before passing judgment.

### Tel Aviv Cabin

By Nathan Dunvitz

**Y**ears ago, I witnessed a scene I shall not forget to my dying days. A fire engine and many passersby were rushing to a store in Mikveh Yisrael Street in Tel Aviv... The air was heavy with smoke coming from the store and a horrifying scene was unfolding inside. A man was clasping the latticework of the store [from the inside] and screaming for help, while the flames consumed his body.

Within minutes, the man became fire fodder. Only a burnt body like a terrible black statue and the heavy stench of scorched flesh remained. People froze in place... Even if they arrived sooner, firemen could not have rescued the man. The store's exit was blocked by flames and they were unable to saw the iron on the window because they did not have the necessary tools.

The picture of the man going up in flames will never leave me. Even as I write these lines, the terrible sensation returns to me after many years. A horrible mixture of hideousness and helplessness... The vision of that human being going up in flames returned to me upon reading about the mattress factory fire in Tel Aviv, in which three laborers from the Gaza Strip perished.

The owner, it was reported, was in the habit of locking his Arab workers nightly inside the factory...a teetering fire trap of a structure in an area where many such fires have erupted over the years. It was his custom to lock up the door with a large padlock from the outside before going home, until the next morning. He simply jailed his workers...and they were unable to escape their tragic fate....

Let them not come and claim that this is not slavery... There are other workers from the occupied territories whose living conditions are the same: huts and factory structures locked from the outside while they sleep. Locked in like slaves to prevent them from going out and, heaven forbid, spending some pleasant time outside....

In March 1852, an American woman, previously unknown, shook America and the world. Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote "Uncle Tom's Cabin" and the world learned about the life of Black slaves in the cotton and rice fields of the American south. Maybe someone will be found who will write the story of the "Tel Aviv Cabin." □

[First published in the Hebrew daily *Ha'aretz* on 19 March 1976 under the title "People and values go up in flames"]

## CASUALTIES ON THE RISE

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) reported that the number of Palestinian casualties in the occupied West Bank and Gaza has gone up steadily every month since the uprising began in December 1987. The report, summarized in UNRWA News, #166 of 17 October 1988, said that 10,242 Palestinians have been wounded by the middle of October. Relative to the population of the occupied territories, this figure would be equivalent to more than 1.5 million injuries in the United States.

## ZIONIST LOGIC

**Herbert Stein**, speaking at the annual dinner of the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs (JNSA), explained why it was good for the U.S. economy to lose a large arms sale to Saudi Arabia. The infusion of money from such a deal, he explained, would increase the U.S. money supply and would have an inflationary effect on the American economy!

Stein was responding to Secretary of Defense Frank Carlucci's earlier statement that the loss of the deal with Saudi Arabia cost the United States billions of dollars and thousands of jobs.

## ISRAEL'S LEBANESE TOP STOOGE SHOT

**General Antoine Lahad**, Israel's top Lebanese mercenary, was shot and seriously wounded early in November. Lahad, commander of the so-called South Lebanese Army, which guards Israel's "security zone" in the occupied south of Lebanon, was allegedly shot by a Lebanese Christian woman, Suad Bishara. Reports have been circulating in Lebanon that Lahad intended to separate the south from the rest of Lebanon to make it an Israeli "protectorate."

## DEATH SQUADS (continued from page 3)

driving some 300 meters, the van stopped and the bodies of the two young men were thrown out onto the road. One of the passengers of the vehicle fired tracer shells in the air, and an IDF force, which was stationed about four kilometers away, quickly arrived on the scene. The soldiers attempted to resuscitate the two dying youths, but without success. Two hours later their bodies were taken to Hebron. Immediately after the incident a three-day curfew was imposed on the village. On the third night of the curfew, the two young men were hurriedly buried in the presence of armed soldiers. Only ten family members were allowed to attend the funeral. Both of them were buried together in a tomb which was sealed with cement. Before they were buried, relatives found eight bullet holes in Kamal's and four in Fadel's body.

The residents reject the IDF version, according to which the incident involved random shots fired at demonstrators who endangered the lives of the passengers of the vehicle. They are convinced that the van entered the village in order to ferret out the wanted men and execute them. The shots were fired at a distance of only a few meters. The two youths were not armed. Had they wanted to, the passengers of the van could have taken the two men alive, but they were not interested in doing so. A few incidents which took place recently under similar circumstances have led

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residents of the territories to the conclusion that at present a policy exists which calls for the quiet execution of youth leaders, who form the nucleus of the uprising activists. Palestinian sources relate that a youth by the name Nizam Abu Hawaila, 24, from the Balata Refugee Camp tried to turn himself in to the authorities but was told that they did not want him alive. Three days later, he was killed during an incident in Balata.

On 11 September, relatives of Mohammad Ahmad Abu Salah, 39, gave the following account to a representative of the Haifa branch of the Association of Civil Rights: "On 8 September 1988, a one-day general strike was declared. At 5:30 a.m., while the entire village of Silat el-Harthiyeh slept, save for the guards at the village entrance, a Ford van with local license plates entered the village... Shots began to be fired from the car in all directions. The slain man, Mohammad Salah, was close to the gunmen. Had they wished to, they could have grabbed hold of him with their hands. He was hit by ten bullets, two of which pierced his heart. Another person, whose arm is now in a cast, was hit by seven bullets." □

## THE PNC DECLARIES PALESTINIAN INDEPENDENCE

*Move Called "The Threshold of a New Dawn"*

November 15, "a day unlike all days," has become Palestinian Independence Day. As anticipated, the Palestine National Council—the highest representative Palestinian body—approved and proclaimed to the world a Palestinian Declaration of Independence. The document outlined a State of Palestine that is democratic and pluralist in its makeup and values, respectful of international covenants, and committed to coexistence and the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

The Palestinian Declaration of Independence, proclaimed in Algiers by the Palestinian parliament-in-exile during its recent meeting designated as the Intifada Session, called 15 November "a day unlike all days." It briefly recounted the Palestinian people's ordeal or dispossession, displacement and occupation, their struggle for national emancipation, and the international community's support for their struggle. Basing itself on the Palestinian people's natural and historic rights in their ancient homeland, on world culture supportive of the people's right to national self-determination, and on international legality—expressed in United Nations resolutions—recognizing the Palestinians' right to an independent state, the PNC proclaimed the existence of the State of Palestine.

The Declaration pledged that the State of Palestine would ensure equal rights for all its citizens, without discrimination on any grounds; it committed itself to respect their political and religious convictions; to guarantee the freedoms of expression and political association, under a democratic parliamentary system of government.

The State of Palestine committed itself to the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. And it pledged itself to coexistence and the resolution of regional and international conflicts by peaceful means. The Declaration appealed to the international community to assist the Palestinian people in their quest to exercise their right as a free and independent people by securing the termination of the Israeli occupation of their homeland.

Unlike previous occasions, when political concessions have caused the dissenting minority to withdraw from the PLO, this time—in a show of Palestinian unity and in the best democratic traditions—the dissenting minority argued vigorously for its point of view but pledged and honored its commitment to respect the will of the majority.

### **Political Program**

The Palestine National Council also approved by an overwhelming majority a political program to facilitate the peaceful resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The program—a Palestinian peace initiative—called for the convening of an international peace conference under U.N. auspices, to negotiate a settlement based on Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338—unanimously endorsed by the world community—and to bring about Palestinian self-determination. The Council also reiterated the PLO's denunciation of terrorism of any kind, endorsed U.N. resolutions on the subject, and reaffirmed the PLO's 1985 anti-terrorism Cairo Declaration.

The Declaration of Independence and the political program endorsed by the PNC represent an authoritative and overwhelming Palestinian commitment to the just and peaceful resolution of the conflict with Israel. They also facilitate the task of the U.S. government to function as a true mediator of the conflict by responding to its requirements for dealing with the Palestine Liberation Organization as the representative of the Palestinian people.

### **Early Reactions**

The Palestinian people throughout the world, inside and outside occupied Palestine, celebrated their day of independence with pride and joy. In the occupied West Bank and Gaza, Israeli troop reinforcements and a total curfew failed to stop the Palestinians from expressing their support for the acts of their representatives. They observed the historic moment with marches and national songs, Palestinian flags, colored balloons and fire-

works displays. A number of celebrating Palestinians were shot by Israeli soldiers as they defied an Israeli ban on expressing support for Palestinian independence. One Palestinian was shot dead by Israeli troops and 12 were wounded the first day, and 27 others were wounded the second day as Israel tried to suppress the popular expression of support for Palestinian independence. The Unified National Leadership of the Uprising distributed a leaflet praising the PNC's decisions and declaring support for them.

In the United States, and elsewhere around the world, Palestinian communities organized demonstrations of support and called on the world's governments to recognize the Palestinian Declaration of Independence. Within a few days, about forty Arab and non-Arab governments had recognized the State of Palestine. The Soviet Union, Turkey, China, India, Indonesia, Yugoslavia, Cyprus, Madagascar, the Democratic Republic of Germany, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Malaysia were among the non-Arab countries which gave early recognition to the new Palestinian state.

Other governments expressed approval of the Palestinian moves. West Germany, Norway and Japan, among others, welcomed the decisions of the PNC and said that it was a step forward in the search for a just peace in the Middle East. U.N. Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar also welcomed the Palestinian move and said that it created opportunities for progress towards peace. The U.N. official said that he consistently maintained that a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict should be based on Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, "and take fully into account the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination." United Nations General Assembly President Dante Caputo also welcomed the PNC's proclamation of Palestine's independence. Caputo, who is Argentina's Foreign Minister, said that the right of the Palestinian people to determine their own destiny is a "fundamental premise."

It is significant to note that among

the Arab states which extended speedy recognition to the State of Palestine—17 within three days—were Jordan and Syria, which have had troubled relations with the PLO during the past few years. It is indicative of deep Arab feelings of solidarity with the national aspirations of the Palestinian people.

In Israel, the reaction was quite different. Paralyzed by a fractured government, burdened by an upsurge of extreme right political parties, and increasingly theocratic, the Israeli government was caught unprepared for the Palestinian peace challenge. Israel's initial reaction has been to bury its head in the sand and pretend that nothing happened. It clamped a state of siege on the occupied West Bank and Gaza, beefed up its military presence there and prohibited expressions of support for the actions of the PNC. Earlier, it had forbidden PNC members from the West Bank and Gaza to attend the historic session.

More surprising was the initial reaction of the Reagan administration. Although President Reagan had initially said that there was something positive about what the Palestinians had done, the administration quickly retreated and rejected the Palestinian Declaration of Independence and refused to acknowledge that the PNC had responded to its requirements for dealing with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

The Declaration was a "unilateral" act, the administration said, explaining its rejection of it. It is not known whether or not the administration is aware of the fact that the American Declaration of Independence was a "unilateral" act, and that the founders of this republic did not wait for the approval of the Red Coats before proclaiming it. It is also not known whether or not they knew that it was an Arab country—Morocco—which was the first in the world to recognize America's independence and to welcome the new American state to the community of nations.

Now that the Palestinians have proclaimed their independent State of Palestine, the process of realizing their dream takes a new turn. They have opted for a peaceful path to a just peace, and the response of the world community, particularly that of the U.S. government, will determine how soon the ordeal of the peoples of the Middle East comes to a happy end.

## THE PALESTINE NATIONAL COUNCIL

### *Political Resolutions, Excerpts*

**B**ased on its responsibility toward the Palestinian people and their national rights, and stemming from its desire for peace expressed in the Declaration of Independence proclaimed on 15 November 1988...the PNC affirms the commitment of the Palestine Liberation Organization to seek a comprehensive political settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestine question. This search for peace shall be within the framework of the United Nations Charter, the principles and provisions of international legality, the principles of international law, U.N. and Arab summit resolutions which guarantee the Palestinian Arab people the right to return, the right to self-determination and the right to establish their independent state on their national soil with peace and security for all states in the region.

In the pursuit of these objectives, the PNC calls for:

**1.** The convening of an effective international peace conference on the Middle East and the Palestine question under the auspices of the United Nations and with the participation of the permanent members of the Security Council and all parties to the conflict, including the PLO, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, on equal footing with the other parties.

The international conference is to convene on the basis of U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 coupled with the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including above all their right to self-determination in accordance with the principles and provisions of the U.N. Charter relevant to the principle of national self-determination, the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force, and according to U.N. resolutions relevant to the Palestine question.

**2-** Israeli withdrawal from all Arab and Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, including Arab Jerusalem.

**3-** The nullification of all annexation measures and the dismantlement of settlements established by Israel on Palestinian and Arab land since 1967.

**4-** The placement of the occupied Palestinian territories, including Arab Jerusalem, under U.N. supervision for a limited period of time to protect our people and create a climate conducive to the successful convening of the international peace conference and reaching a comprehensive political settlement to bring peace and security for all through mutual acceptance, and to enable the Palestinian State to exercise its effective authority over these territories.

**5-** Solving the Palestine refugee problem in accordance with pertinent U.N. resolutions.

**6-** The freedom of worship and religion and access to the holy places in Palestine are guaranteed for all faiths.

**7-** The Security Council shall establish and guarantee security arrangements between all the interested parties in the region, including the State of Palestine.

The PNC reaffirms its earlier resolutions concerning the distinctive fraternal relations between the Palestinian and Jordanian peoples. It also affirms that the future relation between the states of Jordan and Palestine shall be based on the concept of confederation and free and voluntary choice by both peoples to strengthen their historic ties and vital common interests.

The PNC also reaffirms its adherence to U.N. resolutions which approve of the right of peoples to resist foreign occupation, imperialism and racial discrimination, and their right to struggle for independence. The Council proclaims anew its rejection of terrorism in all its forms, including state terrorism, in accordance with earlier resolutions on this matter and other pronouncements such as the Arab summit resolutions in Algiers in 1988, U.N. Resolutions 42/159 (1987) and 61/40 (1985), and the PLO Cairo Declaration of 7 November 1985. □

A Year Later...

## THE PALESTINIAN STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM CONTINUES

### Israeli Repression Fails to Silence Opposition to the Occupation

For twelve months, the Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza have been waging a struggle for liberation from Israel's military occupation. For twelve months, Israel has been waging a futile campaign to quell the Palestinian rebellion.

Israel shot thousands of Palestinians, using live ammunition, rubber and plastic bullets. It poisoned them with toxic gas. It deported people and imprisoned thousands. It blew up homes and it uprooted fruit trees. It imposed extended curfews and cut off electricity and water and telephone communication. It closed schools and universities and professional and charitable societies. It imposed a news blackout and muzzled the media. And it used settler vigilantism and unleashed death squads in a futile attempt to persuade the Palestinians that freedom is not worth the price.

As the first year of the uprising approached its end, Israel chose extremist parties to govern it, parties committed to greater violence to subdue the Palestinians, and to territorial aggrandizement incompatible with the peaceful resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

#### UNRWA Voices Concern

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) also expressed its concern for the future of Palestinian children denied their right to schooling. A statement issued by the Agency's Vienna headquarters on 11 October 1988, said that the loss of a year of instruction places the future of current students and those children who would have been admitted this year "in serious doubt."

UNRWA, which is responsible for 130,000 refugee children in the camps of the West Bank and Gaza, said "we just express our very deep concern for the future of these young people." The prolonged closure of Palestinian schools, including those administered by the international agency, is tragic and costly for both UNRWA and the children under its care. "Security considerations have been invoked to jus-

## ANALYSIS... ISRAEL MAKES A RIGHT TURN

It was not clear at the time, but when Menachem Begin won the Israeli elections in 1977, putting the right wing Likud Party in power for the first time in Israel's history, Israel was inaugurating an extended period of government by fanatics. On the first of November 1988, the Israeli electorate confirmed the fact that the right wing's ascent in Israeli politics was not the temporary deviation it was thought, and hoped, to be a decade ago.

It has become conventional wisdom in the American media to explain the popularity of the right in Israel as a reaction to the Palestinian uprising. This is actually a version of the more general notion that all Israeli excesses—whether bombing refugee camps in Lebanon or voting for the extreme right—are defensive responses to perceived threats. Nonsense.

Israel has been hurtling to the right for quite some time. There was no Palestinian uprising when Begin was elected in 1977. In fact, his election was preceded by one of the quietest periods in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The fact is that a society—any society—gripped by an expansionist fever, as Israel has been since it occupied more territory in 1967, is bound to resort to its fanatics to achieve its ambitions.

The Labor Party legitimized expansionism, in Israeli eyes. It was in power when the occupation took place, when the land confiscation and the building of Jewish settlements began, when Jerusalem was annexed, when homes were demolished and when people were deported. Likud is simply saying "We can do it better and faster." Why should the Israeli public object?

Also, let us not forget that the Likud came to power in 1977 for domestic reasons that have nothing to do with the Palestinians or Arab threats to Israel, real or imagined. The elections were preceded by a period during which Labor's economic policies gave Israel three digit inflation and threatened it with insolvency. They were also preceded by a period of government scandals which rocked Israel, including the suicide of the Minister of Housing, and the resignation of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin who had been caught with foreign bank accounts in violation of Israeli laws.

The Israeli right has also benefited from the policies pursued by the U.S. government during the past few years. Until recently, the view prevailed in Israel that a rightist government in Israel would jeopardize American-Israeli relations. The fact that U.S. collaboration with Israel increased during the past few years convinced the Israeli public that America can be taken for granted.

It is simplistic as well as misleading to blame an inherent Israeli tendency to favor extremists on Palestinian resistance to the occupation. A society which covets the lands of its neighbors frustrates its own design if it puts its moderates in power. Maximalist goals require extremist governments. □

ify the closure of educational institutions," UNRWA said, "but a major consequence is that a generation of Palestinian children—of whom the refugees are such a large share—are unable to exercise their basic right to education."

#### MESA Protests

The Middle East Studies Association of North America expressed concern for the continued closure of Palestinian universities. MESA, a professional association of American scholars specializing in Middle East affairs, adopted the following resolutions during its recent annual meeting, held in Los Angeles 2-5 November 1988:

1. Members of the Middle East Studies Association view with concern the continued closure of institutions of higher education in the West Bank and Gaza.

2. MESA members strongly believe in the need for academic freedom throughout the Middle East.

3. Closure of universities, whenever and wherever it occurs, precludes all possibility for academic freedom to flourish.

4. MESA members therefore strongly urge that the universities in the West Bank and Gaza be reopened as soon as possible under conditions that will allow students and professors to return to their legitimate scholarly pursuits. □

[The following article is reprinted from the Palestine Red Crescent Society Newsletter, No. 1, September 1988].

The national uprising by the Palestinians in the Israeli occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip that began on 9 December 1987 is a continuation of the Palestinian revolution. It has been able through sustained press coverage to draw the world's attention to the true nature of the Israeli occupation and to the Palestinians' struggle against it. Television viewers have witnessed the brutality of the Israeli occupation in their attempt to force submission on the 1.5 million Palestinians living in those territories. The images are distinct. The scenes are repulsive in their viciousness: heavily armed Israeli soldiers mercilessly beating, kicking, clubbing their defenseless young victims. In horror one watches helplessly as Palestinian men, women and children, young and old, are indiscriminately targeted with rubber bullets, live ammunition and toxic tear gas.

But the crimes being perpetrated against the men, women and children of Palestine extend beyond the images captured on film. The Israelis are waging a sinister and pervasive campaign of harassment and violence against the Palestinian institutions that serve them. The aim is the same: to suppress the uprising and break the resistance to Israeli colonial rule. One of the areas under attack, of critical significance during the intifada, has been emergency and other medical services provided through Palestinian facilities.

Over the past nine months, news reports from the occupied West Bank and Gaza have provided numerous accounts of harassment and terror on the part of the Israeli occupiers. Major Palestinian hospitals, such as the Ramallah hospital, as well as smaller clinics have been repeatedly invaded by Israeli troops. During such raids, tear gas canisters have been dropped from helicopters or been thrown by storming troops into emergency departments and various hospital wards. At Gaza's Shifa hospital, for example, about 100 canisters were reported to have been thrown around and within the hospital over a three-day period. Live ammunition and rubber bullets have been used on several occasions by invading soldiers shooting their

## HEALTH INSTITUTIONS UNDER ATTACK



### PRCS Says Palestinian Well-Being Is Threatened

way through hospitals and clinics and terrorizing patients, personnel and visitors. Medical equipment and badly needed medical supplies have been intentionally destroyed. Wounded or injured patients have been ruthlessly dragged from their beds and beaten and often forcibly taken to detention centers or to military prisons where medical care is denied them. Hospitals, as Al-Ittihad (Nablus), have been cordoned off to prevent people from donating blood to the injured. In several instances, potential donors were shot dead or severely injured while waiting outside the hospital. Physicians, nurses, and other health care personnel have been subjected to beatings and other forms of physical violence for providing emergency medical treatment. Their activities and freedom of movement have been curtailed. Medical teams have been prevented from entering the camps and other areas under curfew to give treatment to the injured or sick. Ambulance drivers have been frequently singled out for beatings, interrogation and/or detention while in the process of transporting casualties. Ambulances have been often denied access to trouble areas, intercepted and purposely delayed while en route to hospitals. Scores of wounded have then

been bundled into trucks and taken to detention centers without receiving treatment for their injuries.

In addition to such reprehensible practices, intended by the Israelis to help ultimately bring the Palestinian population to its knees, various military orders have been issued with respect to the operation of Palestinian medical establishments. These are specifically geared towards impeding the provision of medical care to Palestinians involved in the uprising. For example, according to new hospital regulations announced on 5 July 1988 by the military authorities and put in force immediately in the occupied West Bank, any Palestinian is required to pay three nights fees in advance prior to admission, equivalent to the sum of \$510. Government hospitals had formerly provided treatment at relatively low cost and at little or no cost to those injured in the uprising incidents. Such high fees are well beyond the means of the majority of Palestinians in the [refugee] camps and villages. Under this order, a large number of injured Palestinians are having to resort to being cared for at home. The seriously injured, requiring lengthy and intensive health care, are having to seek treatment in private hospitals. These are already functioning under a tremendous workload and often require the injured to travel long distances in order to reach them.

Not only do such regulations directly jeopardize the lives of Palestinians who need emergency medical assistance and treatment, but they also threaten the status of the medical establishments themselves. With a drop in admissions to government hospitals expected as a result of the new measures, informed sources predict that the occupation authorities will soon order the closure of five hospitals on the pretext of their not rendering sufficient services to the community (13 July 1988, *Al-Shaab* newspaper, Jerusalem). This would divide the West Bank into three areas with only one government hospital in each area. They further foresee up to a 27 percent reduction in hospital employees and up to 40 percent reduction in hospital beds.

These steps are intended as additional blows to the weakening health network and a further impediment to its provision of adequate health care to the Palestinian population. □

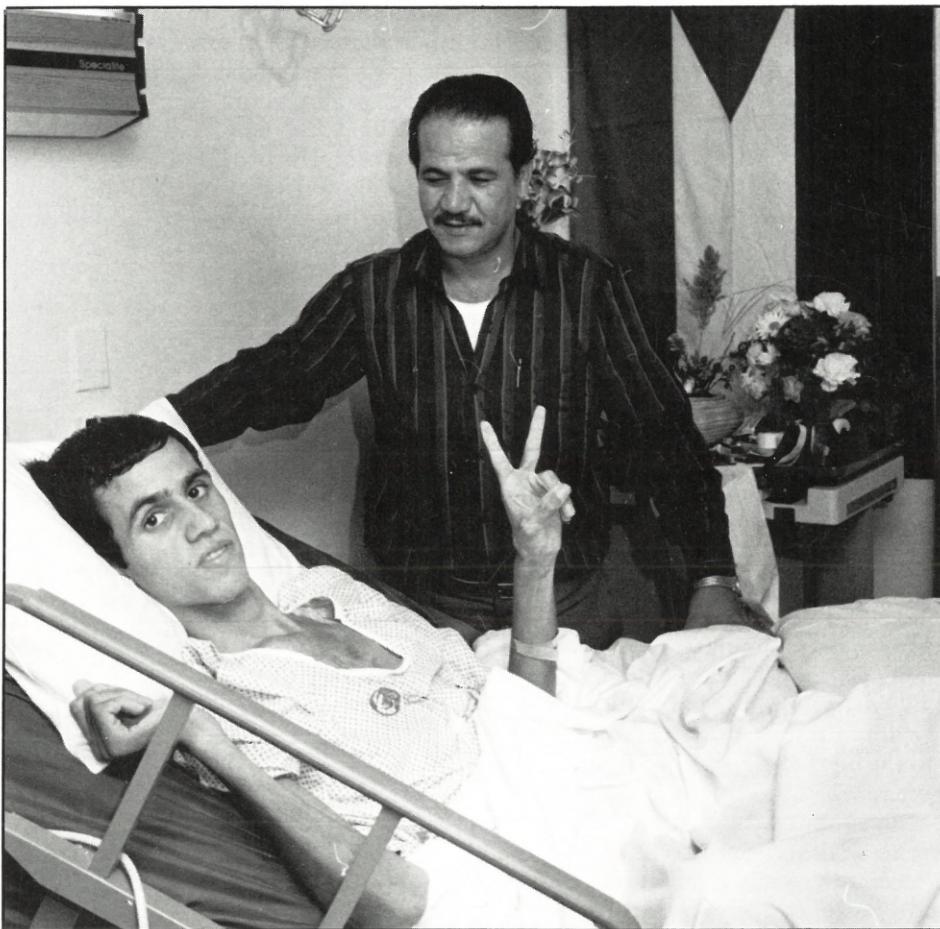
## THE STORY OF A VICTIM

On a hot August day in the summer of 1948, four-year-old Na'im Abu Aker was riding in the bed of a truck. He was sitting on top of the household goods that his family had managed to collect in their escape from the Arab village not far from Jerusalem (Ras Abu Amer), now declared part of the new state of Israel. The family headed east, along with tens of thousands of displaced Palestinians who came to be called "refugees."

Na'im grew up in the Bethlehem area, first in Artas and then in Doha.

Then he moved to Dheishe Refugee Camp in 1967 when he married. The following year, on 3 October 1968, his first sons were born, a set of twins. Two more sons followed and then two daughters, the last born three months before the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982.

Na'im Abu Aker's biography mirrors the history of modern Palestine. His children are the Children of the Occupation. This report concerns one of these children: Mohammad, the third son who was born on 13 September 1971. □



### The Living Martyr By Manal Abdulrahman

On 6 August 1988, Mohammad Abu Aker, a 17 year-old Palestinian youth from Dheishe Refugee Camp in the West Bank, was shot just outside his home. He was shot in the abdomen by a high velocity bullet which explodes and fragments on impact. The Israeli soldier aimed and fired, at which point the boy's tragic, yet miraculous, story began.

Mohammad was rushed to Makkassed Hospital in Jerusalem where he underwent a series of operations

resulting in the complete removal of his torn small intestines and two-thirds of his large intestine. His doctors expected him to die, his parents were informed of the impending loss, and they prepared for their son's burial.

But Mohammad surprised everyone and continued to live. He became the hero of Dheishe Camp. Mary Curtius of the *Boston Globe* said that he became known to Palestinians as the living martyr of the intifada. The

Shabab never left his side, day or night, for fear the Israelis would come and get the miracle boy. He began receiving hyper-alimentation, an IV that sends nutrients directly into the bloodstream, and he began to improve.

Mohammad willed himself to live, but West Bank hospitals were not equipped to give him further help. A group of concerned people found a way to bring him to the United States for needed treatment.

On 4 October he arrived in Boston and was admitted to the New England Deaconess Hospital, where he is under the care of a team of doctors headed by Dr. Anthony Monaco and Dr. Anthony Sahyoun, the latter being of Palestinian origin. The doctors have volunteered their services, but hospital expenses are very high. The community is now raising funds to cover the cost of keeping alive the miracle symbol of the Palestinian intifada.

### [Tax deductible contributions should be made to]:

*The Naim Foundation  
Mohammad Abu Aker Fund  
2812 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 3  
Washington, DC 20008*

On being asked how he has been affected, having come so close to death, Mohammad looks at the large Palestinian flag hanging in his hospital room and says, "I am more determined than ever that I am in the right. Even if I am unable to struggle right now, I know that many others like me are still working for justice... I am not scared, after all who is the one walking around with a machine gun with a finger on the trigger? It is the Israeli soldier; it is he who is afraid. I have justice on my side." About the rebellion in Palestine, Mohammad says that "stone throwing is not only an act of defiance; it is a means of expression. It is the people's way of asserting themselves, for a change, of voicing their long-ignored opinion: No more occupation."

Mohammad's father, who accompanies him, prays for his son to see his family again. He carries the picture of the son he used to know and is saddened by the fact that his son is a shadow of himself, having lost 60 pounds and is bed-ridden. Dr. Khaled Qurie, Mohammad's doctor from Makkassed, continues to express his astonishment at his patient's ability to survive. □

## PALESTINIAN WOMEN'S SOCIETY PLEADS FOR SUPPORT

The Society of In'ash el-Usra, a Palestinian women's charitable society in the West Bank, has appealed for help to rescind an Israeli order to close down the society and to put its president on trial. In its appeal "to every human being who is against injustice and oppression," the society asked people to protest the Israeli action by writing Israeli embassies, human rights organizations, and parliaments.

In'ash el-Usra was ordered closed for two years by the Israeli occupation authorities on 20 June 1988. Its president, 65-year-old grandmother Samiha Khalil, was accused of threatening Israel's security by writing a pamphlet about the Palestinian uprising, by saying in a newspaper interview that the PLO should declare Palestinian independence, by possessing small Palestinian flags, and other similar "threatening" behavior.

The charitable society was established more than twenty years ago as a non-profit humanitarian organization to give assistance to needy Palestinian families and to train Palestinian girls in skills to help them earn a living. It serves more than 30,000 people in the West Bank, particularly women and children. It also administers a literacy program for women.

The closure of In'ash el-Usra is part of an Israeli campaign to subdue the Palestinian uprising by shutting down Palestinian institutions.

### Other Appeals

Appeals to help against Israeli repression also came from other Palestinian women's groups. The Association of Arab-American University Graduates (AAUG) received during its twenty-first annual convention in San Francisco (10-13 November) an appeal from Palestinian women prisoners. "From behind bars," the appeal said, "we urge you to set up a campaign in support of our just demands and create international pressures to protest Israeli practices against Palestinian women prisoners, and to release all Palestinian political prisoners."

The AAUG also received an appeal from the Palestinian Women's Committees in the Occupied Territories. "Palestinian women," the message said, "along with their people are enduring all kinds of suffering at the

## APPEAL ON BEHALF OF PALESTINIAN EDUCATION

During the past twenty-one years, the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation have been suffering from various forms of human rights violations of the Geneva Convention and other international laws concerning people under occupation. Educational institutions were specially targeted: several students and staff were deported. Many others were placed under administrative detention or illegally arrested and tortured. Some were even shot and killed. Universities were closed for as long as four months at one time as a form of collective punishment. Such acts prompted UNESCO in the past to send three missions to the occupied territories to investigate Israeli practices towards educational institutions. All the reports that came as a result of such missions pointed to the illegal practices of Israel and several resolutions were taken by UNESCO (the last resolution 129 taken in November 1987) asking Israel to refrain from these practices. However, such calls by UNESCO were never heeded by Israel.

Since December 1987, the uprising of the Palestinian people took place to protest the prolonged occupation and its illegal practices. The Israeli military authorities responded by escalating their violations of human rights, including the right to education. In fact all educational institutions—elementary, secondary and universities—totaling over 1600 institutes, were closed and the educational rights of about half a million students have been jeopardized. Thousands of students and teachers have also been detained and several were deported and the numbers increase daily. Israel claims that the educational institutions are centers for incitement. However the military occupation authorities have even cracked down on informal home educational gatherings which were recently initiated by the Palestinians in an effort to compensate for the lost academic year. Such action by the Israeli authorities clearly indicates their sinister attempt to keep the Palestinian youth without education.

The situation is most alarming because it concerns the right to education for a whole nation. Peace in the area cannot be achieved when a nation is deprived of such basic rights. The international educational community which prides itself in democracy and equal opportunities, is expected to address itself to this problem. It is, with this in mind, that we call upon all individuals and institutions involved in human rights or educational responsibilities to voice their opinion publicly and do whatever is possible to insure the resumption of all educational activities for the Palestinians and the cessation of all infringements on human rights. Your active and urgent support is now critically needed.

*Palestinian Higher Council for Education, Culture and Science*  
September 1988

hands of the Zionist occupiers of Palestine." The Palestinian women appealed for international intervention "to put a limit to the brutal and collective punishment practices by the occupying forces and to support our just struggle for freedom and independence." □

### Job Announcement

*The Middle East Research & Information Project (MERIP)* is conducting a search for a new Executive Director/Publisher, to begin work on 1 March in Washington, DC.

For information on responsibilities and compensation, contact

*MERIP Search  
P. O. Box 43445  
Washington, DC 20010*

### THE OLDEST PRISONER

**Omar Qassim**, a Palestinian patriot imprisoned for resistance to Israel's occupation twenty years ago, has become the oldest Palestinian political prisoner.

Qassim had joined the Palestinian Resistance and was arrested as he attempted to return to the occupied territories on 28 October 1968. He was sentenced to life imprisonment. Israel refuses to return his freedom to him, even though he suffers chronic ailments as the result of long confinement under oppressive conditions.

Qassim is currently detained in Askalan (Ashkelon) prison in Israel. □

## CHURCH GROUPS SPEAK OUT ON PEACE AND VIOLENCE

*Church groups in the United States, representing a wide variety of religious denominations, have repeatedly called for a more even-handed policy on the Arab-Israeli conflict, reflecting increasing public dissent from Washington's subservience to Israel. The following are the texts of two statements on the Middle East by American churches:*

### *United Methodist Church*

In light of current events in the Middle East, The United Methodist Church reaffirms the 1984 resolution, "The Arab-Israeli Conflict." The continuing violent confrontation between the Israeli Army and Palestinian civilians living under military occupation in the West Bank and Gaza district and citizens within Israel itself is deeply disturbing to the whole human community. We believe that Israel's current iron-fist policy, which results in violence against Palestinian civilians, is totally unacceptable as civilized behavior. This violent behavior brutalizes human beings, both oppressed and oppressors, and leads to a deepening cycle of hatred and violence. We deplore violence and retaliation on either side in this conflict.

Therefore, we call upon the government of Israel to stop beatings, to end the killings, to cease destroying Palestinian homes, to stop deporting Palestinians, to enter into negotiations with Palestinian civilians and the Palestine Liberation Organization over their legitimate demands, including the fair and just distribution of disputed lands.

We call upon Palestinians, including the Palestine Liberation Organization to recognize the State of Israel with secure and recognized borders, and to offer to enter negotiations leading toward self-determination of all persons in the territories under military occupation, and to cease the support or initiation of all terrorist activities.

We call upon the United States government to resist efforts to move the United States Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, and to support efforts to keep Jerusalem an open city with access to all religious groups.

We also call upon the United States government to support international

efforts for Palestinian self-determination, and enter into negotiations with the Palestine Liberation Organization regarding peaceful solutions for the region's problems.

We call upon the United States government to oppose new [Jewish] settlements to the occupied territory, and to stop military and security assistance to Israel until Israel ceases the repression of Palestinians in the occupied territories.

We further recommend, as stated in the 1984 resolution, "Arab-Israeli Conflict," the "development of denominational participation in ecumenical and interreligious networks to raise consciousness, provide information about the Middle East, and to stimulate action to promote peace in the Middle East."

Therefore, we recommend the new organization, "U.S. Interreligious Committee for Peace in the Middle East" whose Call for Peace in the Middle East we affirm.

Finally, we call upon the governments of all other countries, and especially those in which United Methodists are at work, to join in this effort to achieve a just peace with recognition of the rights of all parties. □

[Adopted by the 1988 General Conference of The United Methodist Church]

### *Episcopal Church*

Resolved, the House of Bishops concurring, that the 69th General Convention:

a) affirm the importance of the Church in the exercise of its prophetic role by standing on the side of the oppressed in their struggle for justice, and by promoting justice, peace and reconciliation for all peoples in the region;

b) affirm the existence of the State of Israel and its right to recognized and secure borders, as well as the civic and human rights of all those who live within its borders;

c) affirm the right of the Palestinians to self-determination, including choice of their representatives and the establishment of their own state;

d) support the convening of an international conference over Palestine/Israel under the auspices of the UN and based on all UN resolutions in relation to this conflict, to which all parties of the conflict be invited; and

e) commit itself to continued prayer for Israelis and Palestinians, for Muslim, Jew and Christian, for the achievement of justice, peace and reconciliation for all.

### *Bombing of Refugee Camps Called Morally Repugnant*

Churches For Middle East Peace protested Israeli air raids on the Mieh Mieh Palestinian Refugee Camp and other locations in the South of Lebanon last August. In a letter addressed to Israel's ambassador in Washington, the group told him that it wished to remind him and his government of "the moral repugnancy of such bombings and the danger they pose to the search for a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East."

The letter, signed by representatives of the Presbyterian Church (USA), the Unitarian Universalist Association, the Mennonite Central Committee, the National Council of Churches (Washington Office), and the United Church of Christ (Office of Church in Society), said that "We are writing on behalf of Churches for Middle East Peace to express our most vigorous protest of the bombing by Israel" of Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon.

"This bombing," the letter said, "was out of all proportion as a response to any recent Palestinian offense. It seems less a military action than an act of reprisal and retribution. Bombing a radio station and killing people to make a political statement is no less odious when practiced by a government than when practiced by terrorists. The basic distinction lies in the fact that aerial bombings are almost always more indiscriminate, more damaging, and more deadly. For that reason they deserve to be condemned at every occurrence as a matter of special moral concern." □

## "SILENCE IS CRIMINAL"

The National Association of Arab Americans (NAAA) called on the State Department to demand that Israel "alter its military tactics in the West Bank and Gaza," and urged the Congress to insist on Israeli respect of the Geneva conventions "or face severe economic sanctions."

NAAA's statement, dated 19 October, was protesting the murder of two Palestinian children, ages 5 and 14, the previous day. "Such barbarism," the statement said, "is not an exception, but official government policy." It cited the Jerusalem-based West Bank Database Project's study by Israeli lawyer Carmel Shalev, released on 18 October, which reported that "sadistic brutality on the part of the Israeli army personnel and civilians [Jewish settlers] against Palestinians has become the norm."

The use of plastic bullets, the cause of the death of the two Palestinian children, was defended by Israeli war minister Yitzhak Rabin as an appropriate method to inflict more "casualties and scars," a statement reminiscent of his earlier infamous policy of "force, might and beatings" which unleashed club wielding Israeli soldier to break the bones and limbs of thousands of Palestinians.

### **Talk To PLO**

NAAA also asked the Reagan administration to open a dialogue with the Palestine Liberation Organization to explore with it the possibility of a peaceful settlement to the conflict with Israel. The recent session of the Palestine National Council, NAAA said, had made significant compromises which should be used to advance the peace process. In a letter to President Reagan, in mid-November, NAAA Chairman Alfred Shehab and its president George Moses said that the PLO had met U.S. conditions for dealing with the PLO and "created a new agenda for discussions."

In a press release, NAAA applauded "the courageous action of the PLO" and said that the Arab-American organization "will do whatever we can to persuade our government to use its influence to bring Israel to the negotiating table." The NAAA statement also said that NAAA had also communicated its views to President-elect George Bush and Secretary of State George Shultz. □

## ISRAELI LABOR PRACTICES CONDEMNED

NAAA Charges Abuse and Exploitation of Arab Workers

Representatives of Arab-American groups testified before hearings of the United States Trade Representative investigating Israeli mistreatment and exploitation of Arab workers. The hearings were held in mid-November in response to a complaint by the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC).

A press release by the National Association of Arab Americans (NAAA) said that Maria Segal, NAAA official, told the hearings that Israel has been violating U.S. labor standards and called for corrective measures against Israel.

Segal presented evidence of long-standing and blatant Israeli disregard of the rights of Palestinian workers. Like Israeli workers, she said, the Palestinians must pay one percent of their wages to the Histadrut, Israeli labor federation, but they are denied many benefits guaranteed Jewish workers. They are also paid, on the

average, half the wages received by Jewish workers, they are denied job security, pay increases, sick and vacation days.

The Arab-American group accused the AFL-CIO, which testified in defense of Israel, of bias for financial motivations. "In 1980," the NAAA statement said, "the Israel Bond Organization issued a list of over 30 AFL-CIO affiliates, who with the Teamsters Union (now AFL-CIO affiliate) held 'substantial amounts' of Israel bonds in their portfolios, estimated to be worth a quarter billion dollars." This financial relationship with Israel, NAAA said, makes the AFL-CIO leadership "insensitive to human rights abuses by Israel."

Arab-American groups seek to have the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative modify America's economic policies so that they fully reflect this country's commitment to international human rights. □

### THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

*Tea Leaf Journalism*

In the most bizarre case of political reporting and analysis, the *Wall Street Journal* (6 October 1988) reported the possibility of Palestinian involvement in the case of Americans kidnaped in Lebanon. The Palestinians did not kidnap anyone, it turns out, but maybe they established lines of communications with the Lebanese kidnapers in order to free the hostages and improve their image in America! The headline—which is as far as most *Journal* readers would go—gives a different impression, though. "U.S. Intelligence Officials Now Suspect PLO May Hold Some American Hostages," the headline reads.

It turns out that the whole story is based on something akin to reading tea leaves. The paper quoted an unidentified "sharp-eyed expert" noticing that, in a photograph of some of the hostages, they were drinking tea. Another unidentified "Middle Eastern analyst" deduced that the hostages must be in the custody of Palestinians because, he said, "Lebanese usually drink coffee at such occasions; Palestinians drink tea."

Middle Easterners will undoubtedly be surprised to learn this tidbit about their own customs. □

### EXPULSIONS: WAR CRIMES

An Ad Hoc Committee to End Israeli Expulsion of Palestinians from the Occupied Territories is mobilizing nationwide protest against Israel's policy of deporting Palestinian political protesters from the occupied West Bank and Gaza. The Boston-based group said that "it is important to remind all concerned that Article 6 of the Charter of the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg defined deportation as a 'war crime' and as a 'crime against humanity.'"

The Ad Hoc Committee is urging people to protest to the Israeli and U.S. governments Israel's decision to deport more Palestinians, including 27 now under deportation orders. Thirty-two Palestinians have already been deported since the beginning of the uprising last December. Since Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza in 1967, it has deported more than 2,000 people.

The threat of mass deportation, the Ad Hoc Committee warned, has become urgent. Discussion of mass eviction, it said, "is becoming increasingly widespread in numerous quarters—far beyond extremist circles such as Rabbi Kahane's Kach party." The Committee expressed the fear that the impending expulsions "may well escalate" to mass deportations. □

## COMMENTARY... WHEN COWARDICE BECOMES POLICY

When the U.S. Congress, which prides itself at being the world's greatest debating society, never debates policy on one of the gravest issues of international politics in which America is deeply involved—the Arab-Israeli conflict—the phenomenon requires an explanation. This column is not about the wisdom of congressional positions on the Arab-Israeli conflict, but about the fact that such positions are never subjected to the test of a free debate.

Such an aberration is usually excused by a number of specious claims:

1) That the U.S. Congress, being the great democratic institution that it is, simply reflects the attitudes of the American public. The American people, it is argued, support Israel, and so does the U.S. Congress. But the American people do not support everything Israel does, as does the Congress, and the American people are not as fearful to debate the issues.

2) The U.S. Congress, it is argued, supports Israel because it is an ally of the United States.

Leaving aside the fact that the U.S.-Israeli "special relationship" is a one-sided alliance—where Israel enjoys privileges and the U.S. shoulders obligations—the U.S. is not in the habit of granting blanket endorsements of the policies and actions of its allies. None of America's allies repeatedly frustrates American policies, schemes to create for it regional embarrassments, spies on it and robs it of its military technology and gets away with it. Israel not only gets away with it, but it also gets rewarded with special privileges denied by Washington to the American states. The state of Maryland, for example, gets threatened with withholding federal funds if it fails to enforce traffic laws, but Israel fears no congressional sanctions no matter what American laws it violates.

3) It is argued that the U.S. does not have the ability to pressure Israel, even if it wanted to, and for that reason it is counterproductive to rub Israel the wrong way by going against its wishes. The U.S., which prides itself at being able to pressure the Soviet Union into disarmament negotiations, into withdrawal from Afghanistan, and into liquidating a number of regional conflicts around the world, pleads impotence when it comes to a midget client state such as Israel which depends for its guns and butter on America.

Occasional excuses are unavoidable. But when they become permanent policy they are inexcusable. □

## WAR BY BUREAUCRACY

*Report on House Demolitions*

The Jerusalem-based Palestine Human Rights Information Center and the Chicago-based Human Rights Research and Education Foundation have jointly produced a 30-page report on Israel's policy of demolishing Arab houses. The report, titled *Israel's War By Bureaucracy: We'll Blow Your House Down*, says that Israel has been creating new Arab refugees by demolishing homes and making a growing number of Palestinian families homeless.

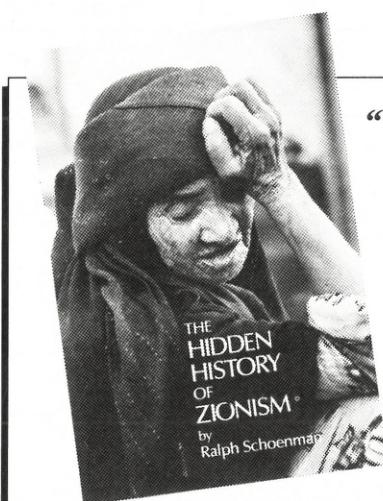
During the first nine months of the Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories, nearly 200 homes have been bulldozed or dynamited, making more than 1,500 Palestinians homeless, "refugees even on their own land."

Palestinian homes are demolished as punishment for opposition to the Israeli occupation or for lack of a building license. In the first case, the home of the accused is destroyed before he or she is tried or convicted. Normally, the family is given a 15-minute notice to vacate the house, then a large number of soldiers are dispatched and, in an atmosphere of a major military operation, the house is bulldozed or dynamited. No appeal is available.

In the case of houses without license, the Israeli authorities have imposed stifling regulations which have made it impossible for the Palestinians to secure licenses and to build legally. It is part of its policy of making it increasingly difficult for the Palestinians, especially younger people, to start a family and continue to live in their country. It is a bureaucratic way to effect the Zionist "transfer" policy.

The report on this bureaucratic war on the Palestinians explains this Israeli policy, gives case studies, and includes a list of 198 homes destroyed between 9 December 1987 and the middle of August 1988. The list gives the location of the house, the name of the owner, the excuse for destroying it, the number of people who lived in it, and the date of its destruction.

The address of the Human Rights Research and Education Foundation is 1 Quincy Court, Suite 1308, Chicago, IL 60604. Their telephone number is (312) 987-1985. □



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## NGO'S CALL FOR INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION FOR PALESTINIANS

The Geneva-based International Coordinating Committee for Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine has appealed to U.N. Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar to seek urgently needed protection for the Palestinian victims of Israeli violence in the occupied West Bank and Gaza. In a letter to the Secretary-General, the organization "expressed concern at the situation in the occupied territories, aggravated by the policy of violence proclaimed by the Israeli Minister of Defense."

The international group, which is a federation of more than a hundred national organizations interested in promoting international support for Palestinian rights, urged the Secretary-General to secure Security Council intervention on behalf of the Palestinian victims of Israeli repression.

Specifically, the NGO's requested that the following measures be taken by the United Nations and its members to provide the necessary protection for the threatened Palestinians:

- The dispatch of fact-finding missions to assess the needs of the Palestinians for international protection.
- Setting up a special commission to investigate repeated occurrences of maltreatment, beatings, toxic gassing, torture and shooting of Palestinians by Israeli troops, prison authorities and settlers.
- The letter also raised the possibility of giving the United Nations "legal custody of the occupied Palestinian territories as a transitional step in the wake of Jordanian renunciation of claims to sovereignty over the West Bank."

"I hope," wrote Jean-Marie Lambert, the organization's director, concluding her letter to de Cuellar, "that you will be able to bring these matters up with the members of the Security Council and employ every means in your power to find, without delay, the most effective way of assuring the ...protection of the Palestinian population in the occupied territories, who are currently facing, in the face of almost total silence and indifference, brutal repression and flagrant violation of human rights." □

## AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENTARIANS FIND HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

A delegation of Australian legislators, representing both houses of parliament, visited the occupied territories and after their return drafted a 42-page report of their visit. The report, summarized in the Jerusalem weekly *Al Fajr* of 13 November 1988, speaks of "shock" and "disgrace" as it recounts Israel's violations of the human rights of the people of occupied Palestine. The following are excerpts from their report:

- "It was the delegation's visit to the Gaza Strip which brought home to it the full impact of the Intifada and the Israeli reaction. It would be fair to say that the delegation was shocked by the conditions it witnessed in Gaza which it regards as an absolute disgrace. Curfews are a regular feature in Gaza and life for the residents has been severely dislocated."
- "The demolition and sealing of houses has increased in

## NOBEL LAUREATES SUPPORT PALESTINIANS

Seventeen Nobel Prize winners of various nationalities issued an appeal on 25 October 1988 calling for the establishment of "a self-governed Palestinian homeland." The group appealed to the two superpowers and to all concerned parties to negotiate an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict through "direct or indirect, bilateral or multilateral" means. The appeal also called for measures "to accommodate legitimate Israeli security concerns."

The signatories, according to *The Washington Post* of 26 October 1988, included the following: Christian B. Anfinsen, Julius Axelrod, Hans Bethe, Konrad Bloch, Val L. Fitch, Walter Gilbert, Sheldon Glashow, Robert W. Holley, Willis E. Lamb, Daniel Nathans, Marshall Nirenberg, Linus Pauling, Edward M. Purcell, Herbert A. Simon, Henry Taube, James Tobin, and Charles H. Townes.

recent months and this naturally enough has had a devastating effect on families."

- "The Israelis have used deportation as a form of punishment in the Territories and this includes several occasions during the first half of 1988. The special committee set up by the U.N. General Assembly...to investigate Israeli practices has identified more than 1,000 cases of expulsion from the West Bank and Gaza."
- "Detainees can be held for up to six months without trial and the order can be extended for a further six months... but the judge is not required to submit the evidence used to the detainee and his or her lawyer when detention is extended."
- "The United Nations special committee lists a total of 1,366 houses demolished between 1967 and 1985. From 9 December 1987 to 9 August 1988 some 78 houses have been demolished and seven sealed... The delegation saw an instance of this practice during its visit to the Gaza Strip."

"The delegation is concerned about human rights violations in the Occupied Territories," the report concluded, "and believes that these will inevitably continue while the legitimate rights of Palestinians, including the right to their own independent state if they so choose, are denied. The delegation is in complete agreement with Mr. [Abba] Eban, Chairman of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, who told it that Israel must realize that it was founded by the U.N. on the understanding that it would not seek 100 percent of the British Mandate Territory of Palestine. There is no reason why Israel should now believe that the international community would accept it taking 100 percent of Palestine." □

## QUOTE UNQUOTE

"We came [to Palestine] to conquer land and settle it... If transfer [expulsion of the Palestinians] is not ethical, then everything we have done here for 100 years is wrong."

Rehavam Zeevi, Knesset member  
*The Washington Post*  
 4 November 1988

## FROM THUGS TO ASSASSINS

The Palestinians have suspected it for some time, and recently it has been confirmed: Israel has stooped to the use of death squads in its futile attempt to suppress the Palestinian resistance to its occupation. "Israel's army," wrote *Time* magazine (7 November 1988), "has reached into its bag of tricks during the unavailing struggle to quell the eleven-month-old Palestinian revolt."

The story was first told by British journalists, whose press credentials were quickly withdrawn for failing to submit their copy to the Israeli censors who would have kept Israel's dark secret: two Israeli army units, sometimes masquerading as foreign reporters and sometimes as local residents, enter Palestinian towns and villages, locate their victims and shoot them in cold blood. Their main targets are young men active in the uprising and suspected of leadership role in local committees which direct its activities.

Two Israeli hit teams are now known to exist. One of them, code named "Cherry," deployed in the West Bank, and the other, deployed in the Gaza Strip, is code named "Samson." They prowl the occupied territories in confiscated vehicles carrying local license plates in order to deceive residents. The Israeli hit teams have also masqueraded as PLO activists and beat up people in the hope of provoking conflicts within the Palestinian communities.

The foreign press in Israel was particularly apprehensive that by using their identities to attack Palestinians, Israel was putting foreign reporters in jeopardy, and charged that such a practice endangers the lives of innocent journalists.

The victims of Israel's death squads include two Palestinians, Kamal Hassan Al-Sari'a and Fadel Ibrahim Shehadeh, who were gunned down by an Israeli hit team in the town of Yatta, near Hebron, on 9 October 1988. Other Palestinians killed during the uprising are also believed to be victims of Israeli death squads.

Although the Israeli government objects to calling the—now exposed—undercover units "death squads," Israeli security sources have admitted that although "killings were not the units' prime task...they had shot dead several Palestinians in ambushes and undercover operations" (*Washington Times*, 25 October 1988).

In all of the known cases where Palestinians were killed by Israeli hit teams, the victims were unarmed and were shot at close range in situations making it clear that the perpetrators had orders not to capture but to kill.

Suspicions of Israel's use of clandestine hit teams began to be aroused when, in September, an armed civilian Israeli settler shot and wounded two persons whom he thought were Arabs but turned out to be "Cherry" agents lying in ambush for Arab victims. □

## ISRAELI MODERATION...

A recent public opinion poll in Israel, advertised as evidence that most Israelis are willing to make concessions in the cause of peace, confirms the old adage that beauty is in the eyes of the beholder. The poll was conducted at the end of September 1988 for the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith by the Israeli polling organization, Dahaf, and Penn & Schoen Associates of New York, and a summary was published in *The Jerusalem Post*, international edition, on 22 October 1988.

*The Post* reported that "sixty-five percent of Israelis would make considerable concessions to achieve peace," but it turns out upon further reading that only 17 percent approved of Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 borders. Other findings of the poll include:

- 57 percent opposed direct negotiations with the PLO "even if it renounced terrorism and recognized Israel's right to exist."

- 64 percent said that even a demilitarized Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza would be "a threat to Israel's existence."

- 53 percent said that "Israel did not use enough force" against the Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza, 29 percent believed that Israel used "the right amount" of force, and only 15 percent said that too much force was used to quell the uprising.

- 71 percent said that the PLO was not sincere in wanting peace.

This hardly reveals an accommodationist surge in Israeli opinion, but—as we said already—beauty is in the eyes of the beholder. □

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